

New Preservation Strategy for Pilsen, Little Village

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By Editor

By: Ashmar Mandou

Elected officials are banning together in an effort to preserve the culture and character of the Mexican community that has irrevocably transformed the Pilsen and Little Village neighborhoods. "Chicago's diverse neighborhoods are the backbone of our great city, collectively highlighting our rich culture, renowned restaurants and amazing residents," said Mayor Emanuel in a statement to the media. "This new strategy will help preserve these important elements of Pilsen and Little Village while keeping it affordable for residents and promoting economic opportunities for future growth."



Emanuel, alongside Alderman Daniel Solis, Ricardo Muñoz and George Cardenas announced a community-based strategy that includes enhanced affordability requirements for market rate housing developments; new housing resources to help existing residents avoid displacement caused by gentrification; a designated landmark district to preserve the area's unique architecture; an industrial modernization strategy to increase sustainable, head-of-household jobs; and open space improvements that enhance neighborhood character and livability.

"These strategies directly address the concerns of residents and businesses that want to preserve two of the most unique and culturally significant neighborhoods in Chicago," Alderman Solis said. Pilsen and Little Village evolved as the center for Mexican life in the Chicago area over the last 50 years, following previous influx of immigrants that included Czechs and Bohemians beginning in the late 19th century. More than 80 percent of their 115,000 residents identify as Latino, compared to 29 percent citywide, according to the American Community Survey.

"I am pleased with the plan the City of Chicago has put forward to protect the character of our neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are what they are today because of the hard work and dedication of its residents and we must work to keep these communities affordable for its families," said Alderman Ricardo Muñoz. Several of the strategies are identified in the Pilsen and Little Village Action Plan, completed last year by the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) and the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) through extensive community participation. "While the City needs new development to fuel its economic future, that growth needs to be balanced and work for local residents," said. Alderman George Cardenas. "This pilot strikes that balance and I believe it will become a model for other neighborhoods and cities across the country."

